
MRSA SCREENING

GENERAL INFORMATION

About MRSA

MRSA stands for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. There are lots of micro-organisms (germs) on our skin and in the environment around us. Most of these are harmless and some are beneficial, however a very small proportion can cause harm.

Staphylococcus aureus is a common germ that is found on the skin and in the nostrils and mouth of approximately a third of healthy people. Most forms of this bacteria can be treated with methicillin-type antibiotics, but some are methicillin resistant and are known as MRSA bacteria. Some people carry MRSA on their skin or in their nostrils and are likely to be unaware of this because it does not harm them or lead to any symptoms.

MRSA can, however, present problems if it enters the body and causes infection. It can cause abscesses and boils, and infect wounds and entry sites into the skin (made by a drip for example). It can then spread in the body, causing a serious infection such as septicaemia (blood poisoning). MRSA is resistant to many types of antibiotic, so can be difficult to treat. And as it is more likely to affect people who are already unwell, or those who are having surgery, it is of particular concern in hospitals. We therefore screen certain groups of patients prior to admission to Cromwell Hospital.

Which groups of patients will be screened?

- those having:
 - cardiac surgery
 - neuro/spinal surgery
 - orthopaedic surgery
 - transplant surgery
 - vascular surgery
 - a bone marrow transplant
 - any other procedure where an implant is involved
 - a Central Venous Catheter (CVCs) inserted
- those undergoing dialysis
- admissions to the Intensive Care Unit, Paediatric Intensive Care Unit and High Dependency Unit
- admissions from other healthcare organisations (local and international)
- haematology patients
- patients admitted with open wounds and lesions
- oncology patients (including those receiving radiotherapy when it is anticipated they will receive further treatment on the Oncology Ward or Chemotherapy Day Unit)
- patients with a previous history of MRSA infection or colonisation
- those who work in healthcare who have physical patient contact

MRSA Screening

The screening process is simple:

one u A swab is taken from the nose (if you have a wound or open lesion samples will also be taken from these areas)

two u Swab(s) are then sent to the laboratory for analysis (results from the nose swab will be back within a day, other swabs may take up to 3 days)

three u If the test shows that you are free from the MRSA bacteria then your appointment will be confirmed

If you are one of the small proportion of people who carry the MRSA bacteria on your skin (known as being 'colonised' with MRSA), you will be given suppression treatment of an antibacterial ointment for your nose and antiseptic washes for your hair and body to be used for five days. Whilst there is no guarantee that this will remove the MRSA from your skin, it will help reduce the number of MRSA bacteria on your body.

FAQs

When does MRSA screening take place?

If you are being admitted by a consultant at Cromwell Hospital he or she will arrange for you to have the MRSA screening during your initial consultation, or you can make an appointment for the test to be completed at a time more convenient for you. The test must be performed at least one week prior to your proposed admission date. If you choose to have the MRSA screening done somewhere else, a printed laboratory report of your MRSA results must be provided to the Pre-admission team at the hospital before your admission can be confirmed*.

How do I get the results of the MRSA test?

Results from MRSA tests performed at Cromwell Hospital will be available within a day and you will be contacted if the test shows you have MRSA bacteria on your skin.

If the tests show I have MRSA bacteria on my skin, what do I need to do?

The Pre-admission team will contact you to organise your suppression treatment, which requires the use of an antibacterial ointment for your nose and antiseptic washes for your hair and body. This takes five days to complete and should be started so that the final day of your treatment (day 5) falls on the day of your operation or procedure. You can either return to the hospital to collect your treatment pack or we will liaise with your GP who will write a prescription, enabling you to pick up the treatment at your local pharmacy. For your own safety, your surgery and/or medical procedure will have to be delayed until you have completed the treatment. Your consultant or the hospital will be able to advise you about your admission.

How does MRSA change the way Cromwell Hospital looks after patients?

When you come into hospital for your procedure we will take infection control precautions to keep you safe and to prevent the possible spread of MRSA to other patients.

What precautions do visitors need to take?

MRSA is not harmful to visitors who are healthy, including pregnant women, children and babies. However, it can affect people who have certain long term health problems. The nursing staff can advise you and your visitors what precautions need to be taken. We also ask that any visitors wash their hands thoroughly before and after visiting so that they do not spread MRSA to others.

Pre-admission team

Tel +44 (0)20 7460 5989

Fax +44 (0)20 7835 5597

Email pre.admission@cromwellhospital.com

Infection Control team

Tel +44 (0)20 7460 5597

Where can I get more information about MRSA?

Bupa MRSA factsheet: www.bupa.co.uk/health

A simple guide to MRSA, Department of Health: www.dh.gov.uk

MRSA FAQs, Health Protection Agency: www.hpa.org.uk

* If the test shows you have MRSA bacteria on your skin, you will be given ointment/washes to use for five days. This does not include emergency admissions who are MRSA screened on arrival and managed in accordance with the Cromwell Hospital MRSA Policy.

This information is published by Cromwell Hospital and is based on reputable sources of medical evidence and experience from over 30 years of treating patients. It has been peer reviewed by Cromwell Hospital doctors. The content is intended for general information only and does not replace the need for personal advice from a qualified health professional.

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